

Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission

Connecticut River Fisheries Program

Background and History

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Background

Early 1700s – Connecticut River is important to early European settlers because of the subsistence fishery for shad and salmon & role in local transportation of goods like logs and other products

1795 – First U.S. lock and canal system is built in Holyoke, MA to improve navigation for commerce

1798 – First dam is constructed all the way across the Connecticut River in Montague, MA

1808 – Connecticut River stock of Atlantic salmon extinction is attributed to the dams which completely blocked access to spawning & nursery habitat

1864 – State Fish Commissions are created to address the alarming decline in fish populations (partly due to over-fishing) in the Connecticut River

1866 – Commissioners cite pollution, a by-product of the many mills located on the river and its tributaries, as a problem; The first Atlantic salmon restoration program is initiated & justified partly on nutritional needs of children

1873 – Supreme Court requires construction of a fishway at Holyoke dam

1890 – States give up the first restoration effort because progress is slow, harvest regulations are repealed in Connecticut, and the fishways are inefficient

1922, 1936, & 1955 – Major floods in the basin prompt construction of more dams for flood control

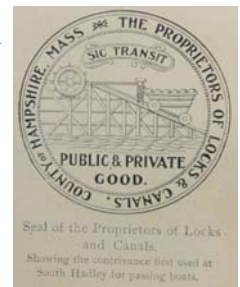
1960s – New funding and Clean Water legislation make restoration possible again



Today's Fish Restoration Program

Objectives of the Commission:

- Priority placed on research into why so few adult salmon are returning
- Emphasis placed on cooperative education programs
- Expansion of restoration activities to include other migratory fish species
- Initiation of new habitat restoration activities
- Continued importance placed on the release of hatchery-produced salmon



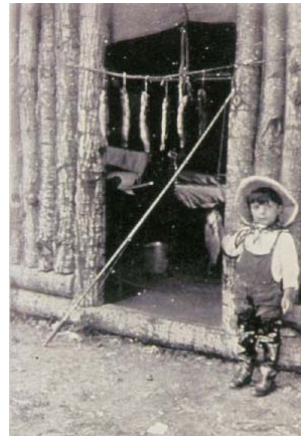


1960s & 1970s

- The feeding grounds of Atlantic salmon are discovered in the North Atlantic Ocean leading to increased harvest & reduced returns
- New laws provide incentives to clean up the river
- New laws provide funding for anadromous fish restoration
- The State and Federal natural resource management agencies begin a restoration program for migratory and resident fish in the four-state basin
- The first Atlantic salmon returns to the Connecticut River (1974)



1980s



- More hatchery facilities are converted to produce Atlantic salmon
- Efforts are focused on upstream passage at mainstem dams in Turners Falls, MA and Vernon, VT
- The Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center is constructed to assist
- The Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission is created by Congress
- The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization is formed to protect salmon in the high seas
- The production and stocking of hatchery-reared Atlantic salmon smolts is emphasized

1990s



- Emphasis is placed on the construction of downstream passage at dams
- Fish passage at tributary dams is also increasing
- Hatchery production is based on Atlantic salmon stocks that have been produced in and that have returned to the Connecticut River.
- Emphasis on hatchery production is shifted to fry with a stocking goal of 10 million annually